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LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 8th July, 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, S. Campbell, W. Gilligan, E.J. Goodjohn, E. Goodjohn, W.A. Hennessy, N.P. Hodges, J. Lynch-Wilson and N.B. Marshallsea.

Co-Opted Members: M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education), E. Woodfield and I. Da Silva (Vale Youth Council).

Also present: Councillors R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language) and C.P. Franks.

179 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

180 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor S.J. Haines.

181 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor E. Goodjohn declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 5 – Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report: Quarter 4 Performance 2023/24. Councillor Goodjohn declared a personal interest in that he was a student at the Cardiff and Vale College for the duration that the report related to. The nature of the interest meant that Councillor Goodjohn remained in the meeting for the duration of the item.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 4 – Libraries Annual Report. Councillor Hennessy declared a prejudicial interest in that he was a Trustee for Rhoose Library and so he left the meeting for the duration of the item.

Councillor C.P. Franks, not a member of the Committee, declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 4 – Libraries Annual Report. Councillor Franks declared a prejudicial interest in that he was a Trustee for Dinas Powys Library and that he had received dispensation to speak on such matters.

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182 PRESENTATION – UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS CURRICULUM – CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM –

The presentation was introduced by the Central South Consortium’s Principal Improvement Partner. She was joined by the Area Lead – Humanities and the Associate Advisor for Religion, Values and Ethics. The presentation informed the Committee of the Consortium’s work to support Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) teaching within schools and included video presentations / case studies from the following schools:

- Victoria Primary School;
- St. Nicholas Church in Wales Primary School;
- Evenlode Primary School;
- St. Athan Primary School; and
- Whitmore High School.

Councillor W. Hennessy queried what would happen if a child’s parents insisted on their child not being part of the religious education lessons. In reply, the Associate Advisor stated that the RVE curriculum was different to religious education where there was a parental right to withdraw their child. It was important to note that the delivery of RVE was delivered in a pluralistic way and as part of a critical objective. Therefore, there was no need for any learner to be withdrawn because of the different approach.

Councillor J. Lynch-Wilson commented that the Committee should have more learner participation in its presentations.

Councillor E.J. Goodjohn commented that the video presentations were very appreciated and she was impressed with the work being undertaken which instilled tolerance, understanding and open mindedness through the age ranges.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Committee’s thanks be passed on to the schools for their video presentations and the contents of the presentation be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

183 LIBRARIES ANNUAL REPORT (DLS) –

The report provided elected Members with an overview of library services activity between 2022/23 and 2023/24.

The purpose of the Libraries Annual Report was to provide an overview of how it operated, an evaluation of its key achievements and an evidence base for

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demonstrating the positive impact the Council's library services had had on communities.

The full report was attached in Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor C. Franks, not a member of the Committee but with permission to speak, stated that he was speaking as a Trustee for Dinas Powys Library. He stated that he would like the library to be included when events were being held at the larger libraries. Councillor Franks stated that the range of activities being held at Dinas Powys Library were increasing and there was a six week programme for the summer holidays which included story time and baby scrabble as some examples. Councillor Franks highlighted the role of the libraries in distributing waste and recycling bags and he highlighted the increase in volume of bags being handed out. As a final point, Councillor Franks stated that there was excellent support from the peripatetic library assistant and he was very grateful for their assistance and guidance. In reply to some of the points raised, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that in terms of engagement across all the libraries, that was one of the responsibilities for the new Library and Cultural Service Manager. The role would also offer support and guidance around the work being undertaken by the libraries.

Councillor H. Payne offered thanks to the staff and volunteers of the libraries and it was interesting to see how the libraries were evolving. The evolution included the new types of clubs on offer such as mind craft and lego building. It was therefore encouraging to see the Library Service focusing on the demands in the community.

Councillor N. Marshallsea also offered thanks to the staff and volunteers and commented on the importance of libraries in enhancing the lives of children and adults and particularly in relation to encouraging children to learn Welsh. Councillor Marshallsea queried whether there had been any consideration around the possibility of a human library. In reply, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that in terms of a human library, a session had been run last year which included participants from the Council's 21st Century Schools Programme in Barry where architects and designers of building were able to come to the library and be asked questions. It was important for the activities offered by the Library Services to be marketed. An example of this was the new website for the makerspace, which could be found online at www.vogmakerspace.co.uk.

Councillor A. Asbrey commented that as a volunteer for Dinas Powys Library for over six years which had been very successful and had grown over that time, there was a concern around the reliance on volunteers. Councillor Asbrey therefore stated that if funding was to become available it would be appreciated if that could go to the running of libraries.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried what was being done in relation to some areas of Barry where it was easier for people to visit Cardiff Library as opposed to Barry. In reply, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that one activity that the Council was carrying out to reach those hard to reach communities was the introduction of a mobile library service. The other thing that had been piloted during Covid was the roll-out of activities outside of a library setting through

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the use of schools and places such as Penarth Pier. Those activities had been successful especially in terms of younger children and helping them transition back to school.

In reply to a query regarding Barry Library being included as part of the new C-Card scheme, the Head of Service stated that he was unsure and would check if it was something that the Council could do.

Councillor R. Thomas (Chair) asked what more could be done in order to encourage younger people to volunteer at the Library Services. In reply, the Head of Service stated that in some ways volunteering was addictive and the Council had been successful in carrying out engagement through the high schools. That had led to the creation of community groups with specific interests and it was something that the Council would continue to grow which would support volunteering.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the Libraries Annual Report and the progress and outcomes that the service had achieved during the period be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To ensure that Cabinet has oversight of the performance of the Library Service and its impact during the period and takes into account any comments received from the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.

184 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DLS) –

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 4 (Q4) (1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) (2023/24) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The appended presentation was intended to provide Members with an overview of end of year performance as early as possible. This was ahead of the more detailed Annual Self-Assessment 2023/24 which would be reported to Cabinet and Full Council prior to publication in December 2024.

3 of the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q4 and one Well-being Objective was attributed an Amber performance status (Well-being Objective 1). This reflected the good progress made to date in meeting the Council's ADP commitments for 2023/24.

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91% (463 out of 507) of planned activities outlined in the Council's ADP had been attributed a Green performance rating reflecting the positive progress made in-year, and 9% (44) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 161 performance measures aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 85 measures where a performance status was applicable. 46% (39) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 14% (12), Amber status and 40% (34), Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 76 measures with 56 of these relating to measures establishing baseline performance for 2023/24, and for 20 measures no data was available.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, 97.27% (107 out of 110) were attributed a Green performance status and the final 2.73% (3) were attributed a Red status. Of the 18 measures reported where a RAG rating was applicable, 44.45% (8) were attributed a Green performance status, 33.33% (6) an Amber status and 22.22% (4) were attributed Red status.

For ease of reference, performance exceptions aligned to the Scrutiny Committee's remit highlighted the current status of Red performing actions identified in previous quarters to show direction of travel at end of year. This would enable Members to quickly gauge whether proposed remedial actions had been undertaken in year to progress these actions. This approach of reporting exceptions reflected the changes requested by Elected Members on performance monitoring of the ADP.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q4 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Councillor N. Marshallsea queried whether there was any funding available to support schools and the work with the local nature partnership. In reply, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources stated that support staff were available to assist schools as part of the 21st Century Schools Team. Staff would attend schools to present to children around the schemes available and how they could become involved in helping nature. In addition, there was support available through the Council's Project Zero and there was support behind the scenes to assist schools obtaining grant money.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried the slippage in tackling the increase in the number of children presenting as Not in Education, Employment or Training. In reply, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that further information would be sent outside of the meeting.

In response to a query regarding the special school funding model, the Director advised that there were plans to look at the funding formular.

Councillor E. Goodjohn also commented on the positive work around Welsh medium education which had hit its target. He also queried when would the IDev module be

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available to Council staff to assist them with Welsh medium. The Director stated that she would follow that up with the Head of Human Resources.

Co-opted Member, I. Da Silva stated that comments had been raised around the quality of sanitary products within schools and he asked whether that could be investigated. In reply the Director confirmed that a review of the quality of the products would be undertaken.

Finally, it was agreed for a Committee visit to Ysgol Y Deri to be arranged.

There be no further comments or queries, the Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 4 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 commitments as aligned in the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T the comments of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(2) To ensure that Cabinet are aware of the comments of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.